



Requirements and Instructions for Semifinalists in the 2016 National Merit® Scholarship Program

REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A FINALIST

As a Semifinalist named in the fall of 2015, you must advance to Finalist standing before you can be considered for a Merit Scholarship® award to be offered in 2016. You must meet all specified requirements and deadlines, or you will be withdrawn from the competition. To qualify as a Finalist, you must:

1. Continue to meet all program entry requirements (published in the 2014 *Official Student Guide to the PSAT/NMSQT*®).
2. Be enrolled in the last year of high school and be planning to enroll full time in college in the fall of 2016 **or** be enrolled in the first year of college, if grades 9 through 12 were completed in three years or less.
3. Be a citizen of the United States; or be a U.S. lawful permanent resident (or have applied for permanent residence, the application for which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. If you have not yet become a U.S. citizen, see box below.
4. Be fully endorsed for Finalist standing and recommended for a National Merit Scholarship by your high school principal (or school official designated by the principal).
5. Have a record of consistently very high academic performance in **all** of grades 9 through 12 and in any college course work taken. Your school must provide a complete record of high school courses you have taken, grades earned, and course work you will take in grade 12. The school should also notify National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) of any noticeable decline in your academic performance during the current year. If you are now in college, high academic performance must continue and must be documented by an official transcript of your record (see instructions on page 2 of this document).
6. Submit the completed application to your high school official as soon as possible using NMSC's Online Scholarship Application (OSA). The school official will complete the school's sections of the application for final transmittal to NMSC by October 7, 2015.
7. Take the SAT® and earn scores that confirm your 2014 PSAT/NMSQT performance. You must take (or have taken) a national administration of the SAT between October 2013 and December 2015. Also, **it is your responsibility** to file a request with the College Board SAT Program to have an official report of your SAT scores sent to NMSC (**code 0085**). See page 2 of this document for detailed information about authorized SAT administrations and score reporting.
8. Provide any additional documentation and information that NMSC requests.

If you have not yet become a U.S. citizen, you must submit with your completed *National Merit Scholarship Application*:

- A letter signed by you explaining your plans for becoming a citizen, including the date on which you expect to be eligible and will apply for U.S. citizenship.

AND

- **If you are a U.S. lawful permanent resident**, a copy of your Permanent Resident Card (Green Card); **or** a copy of your passport including the identity/biographical page and the "I-551" stamp showing that you have been granted lawful permanent resident status.

OR

- **If you have applied for U.S. lawful permanent residence**, a copy of Form I-797 Receipt Notice from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) that verifies you filed the "Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status" (Form I-485). *Note: Form I-797 Receipt Notice must be received by NMSC on or before January 31, 2016.*

TAKING THE SAT AND HAVING YOUR SCORES REPORTED

To become a Finalist, you must confirm your PSAT/NMSQT performance with scores on the SAT. It is **solely your responsibility** to:

1. take the SAT on a date authorized by NMSC; and
2. request that the College Board SAT Program send an official report of your SAT scores to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (**code 0085**). **NMSC must receive your scores no later than December 31, 2015, for full award consideration.**

You can register for the SAT **online** at www.collegeboard.org or by mail. For more information, contact the SAT Program at (866) 756-7346 Domestic or (212) 713-7789 International.

The SAT Program will **not** report your scores to NMSC unless you request it, and you cannot substitute a photocopy of the score report sent to you or your school for the official report. Send all testing and score reporting fees directly to the SAT Program.

Authorized SAT administrations

Scores earned on national administrations of the SAT **from October 2013 through December 2015** will be considered by NMSC. NMSC will not accept scores from a national SAT administration taken earlier than October 2013 or later than December 2015. Your critical reading score, mathematics score, and writing multiple-choice subscore [CR + M + W(mc)] will be the basis for determining whether you meet the confirming score requirement. Please note that NMSC will consider only the highest set of scores from a single administration of the SAT.

If you have not yet taken the SAT

Register **now** to take the SAT on one of the following dates in 2015 and request scores be sent to NMSC (**code 0085**):

- October 3
- November 7
- December 5

We urge you to take the SAT no later than November 7 and not wait until the December administration.

If you have already taken an authorized administration of the SAT

IMMEDIATELY request that an official score report be sent to NMSC (**code 0085**) by using one of the following services:

1. View and Send Scores at <http://sat.collegeboard.org>
- OR**
2. Automated Telephone Service at (866) 756-7346 Domestic or (212) 713-7789 International

Be sure NMSC will be sent a report of your SAT scores

Look at the score report sent to you by the SAT Program to verify it shows National Merit Scholarship Corporation (**code 0085**) as a recipient. If NMSC is not listed, immediately contact College Board to request that a score report be sent. **This is very important** because you will be withdrawn from further consideration in the competition if NMSC does not receive a timely report of your scores from an authorized SAT administration.

SEMIFINALISTS NOW ENROLLED FULL TIME IN COLLEGE

As instructed in the OSA, submit the completed application to the school official (high school you last attended), who will complete the school's sections of the application for final transmittal to NMSC by October 7, 2015. If you report a college choice using the OSA, it should be the college you plan to attend during the 2016–17 academic year.

To be considered for Finalist standing, you must meet all requirements specified on page 1 and, immediately after the end of the current term, arrange to have your college send an **official transcript** of all college course work you have taken to Scholarship Administration at NMSC.

COLLEGE CHOICE

College choice is not considered in determining whether a Semifinalist qualifies as a Finalist. However, it is requested because every National Merit Scholarship can be used only for attendance at a college or university in the United States that holds accredited status with a regional accrediting commission on higher education. All National Merit \$2500 Scholarships and almost all corporate-sponsored awards (explained in the *Information about the National Merit Scholarship Competition* document) **are transferable** from one regionally accredited U.S. institution to another, but college-sponsored awards are not (as explained in the next section).

You are asked to report your first-choice college (to which you are applying for admission) on your *National Merit Scholarship Application* using the OSA. However, if you are unsure, indicate “undecided” on your application and report your first-choice college to NMSC as soon as possible. To report your college choice or a change in your choice, log back in at osa.nationalmerit.org using the username and password you created when you set up your account. Please note that you may not make a change to this information until your high school transmits the completed application to NMSC. It is your responsibility to apply and be admitted to the college you plan to attend.

REPORT OF A SPONSOR COLLEGE AS FIRST CHOICE

Consideration for a college-sponsored Merit Scholarship award is limited to Semifinalists who qualify as Finalists and who also

1. report to NMSC that a sponsor college is their first choice (see the list of college sponsors included in the “Competition Instructions” section of the OSA and at nationalmerit.org/resources.php);
2. have applied for admission to the sponsor college; and
3. have **not** been offered any other National Merit Scholarship (corporate-sponsored, National, or another college-sponsored award). No student will receive more than one scholarship offer from NMSC.

A college-sponsored Merit Scholarship award can be used **only** at the institution financing it and therefore is canceled if the winner changes college choice.

Schedule specific to **college-sponsored** awards:

March 1 through May 31, 2016: A Finalist who has reported a sponsor college as first choice by March 1 will be included in the first group referred to that institution for scholarship consideration. Only the sponsoring college you have listed as your first choice will be notified. Periodically NMSC will notify sponsors of additional Finalists who have reported (by May 31) the college or university as their first choice.

May 1, 2016: NMSC will begin mailing college-sponsored Merit Scholarship offers.

NOTE: If NMSC receives notification of a change in college choice from a Finalist **after** mailing a college-sponsored Merit Scholarship offer to that student, the change in college choice will not be processed and the Finalist **cannot** be offered another college-sponsored Merit Scholarship award. This applies even if the new choice of college is one that also sponsors Merit Scholarship awards. Therefore, a Finalist who has previously reported a sponsor college as first choice but is uncertain about it may choose to notify NMSC that he or she is now “undecided” to prevent being made an offer from a school he or she is uncertain about attending; such notification must be submitted online at osa.nationalmerit.org **before May 1**. The Finalist can subsequently report a firm college choice that NMSC receives by May 31.

May 31, 2016: Deadline date for NMSC to **receive** reports of a sponsor college as first choice. Because it is necessary to end the competition in a timely manner, only college choice reports that NMSC receives by May 31 will be used to identify the final group of candidates to a college or university that sponsors awards.

See the **Schedule and Deadlines** on the next page.

Schedule and Deadlines for the 2016 Merit Scholarship® Competition

2015

- September 9** NMSC releases names of about 16,000 Semifinalists to news media
- October 3** SAT administration date
- October 7** Schools transmit completed *National Merit Scholarship Applications* to NMSC using the OSA
- November 7** SAT administration date
- Semifinalists who took an earlier authorized administration of the SAT should have requested the SAT Program to report scores to NMSC (**code 0085**)
- December 5** Last date for Semifinalists to take the SAT

2016

- January 24** Selection committees begin choosing Merit Scholarship award winners
- February 3** NMSC mails notification to high school principals about the status of their Semifinalists; a *Certificate of Merit* is provided for each Semifinalist who qualifies as a Finalist
- February 10** NMSC notifies Finalists of their status at their home addresses
- March 1** Finalists who have reported a sponsor college as first choice by this date will be included in the first group referred to the institution for scholarship consideration
- March 9** NMSC begins mailing corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship offers to winners at their home addresses
- March 24** NMSC mails offers of National Merit \$2500 Scholarships
- May 1** NMSC begins mailing offers of college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards (**see NOTE on page 3**)
- May 31** Deadline for NMSC to **receive** reports of college choice for identifying the final group of candidates for college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards

NMSC releases announcements of Merit Scholar designees to news media nationwide:

April 20	Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners
May 11	National Merit \$2500 Scholarship winners
June 1 and July 18	College-sponsored Merit Scholarship winners

If you have questions, contact: National Merit Scholarship Corporation, Attn: Scholarship Administration
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